

Project Receives National Attention – submitted by Marjorie Willison

An idea that started with Spryfield Residents' Association (SRA) is now of great interest to a national network of public health professionals who are studying the effects of community layout on quality of life and public well being. This is a result of the Healthy Housing, Healthy Community Project, sparked by the SRA and administered by the Captain William Spry Community Centre Board of Directors (CWSCC Board).

Residents in the SRA recognized that development can bring many benefits, provided it is done in ways that improve the quality of life in a community. They spent two years developing a Principles of Healthy Development Checklist, identifying community design characteristics that they thought would be beneficial. SRA considered several aspects such as transportation, housing, public places, wilderness areas, and recreation.

CWSCC Board received funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada to verify the work of the residents, and research evidence of any links between community design and health. CWSCC Board also wanted the Healthy Housing, Healthy Community Project to carry this important discussion to a wide variety of people who live in Spryfield and communities around the Sambo Loop, to get their ideas and feedback about what makes any community a great place to live.

Clara Stewart Robertson, a Community Design student at Dalhousie University, has been exploring various art activities this summer to encourage discussion among residents. Sharpie has contributed \$300 worth of Sharpie felt pens for her work with residents. The Project is also running a photo contest to find out what residents value about their community. (For photo contest details see www.spryfield.ca, or phone 477-0964.) From October 15th to 17th, the Project will also hold public discussions and an open house to create more opportunities for residents to chat.

Kate Thompson, Project Coordinator, is connecting locally to HRM planners, health professionals in Capital Health District, developers in metro, and interested engineers. Says Thompson, "Creating great places to live, work, and play requires community spirit and a lot of collaboration." She has also been invited to share the Project's successes in a web-based presentation for community health professionals across Canada.

It is fascinating to see how Spryfield, which started as a small farming community in the 1760s, is now taking its place in 2006 as a national innovator, exploring urban designs that promote quality of life and public well being.